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## Profile Interview With Norman E. Fenn

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## PROFILE INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN E. FENN

Shannon L. Castek, *College of Pharmacy*

### STUDENT AUTHOR BIO SKETCH

**Shannon L. Castek** is a fourth-generation Boilermaker and fourth-professional-year student in the Purdue University College of Pharmacy. Throughout her time in pharmacy school, Shannon has enjoyed supplementing her curricular work with service-learning activities, participating in health screenings and immunization events with the Purdue chapter of the American Pharmacists Association–Academy of Student Pharmacists. She plans to pursue a pharmacy residency following graduation to achieve her dream of becoming an ambulatory care pharmacist. In this article, Shannon highlights the service-learning endeavors of Dr. Norman Fenn in the College of Pharmacy.

### FACULTY BIO SKETCH

Norman E Fenn, III, PharmD, BCPS, is an academia and ambulatory care fellow in the Purdue University College of Pharmacy. He began his pharmaceutical journey working as a pharmacy technician in his native province of Nova Scotia, Canada and went on to earn his Doctor of Pharmacy from University of Colorado's Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. He completed one year of postgraduate pharmacy residency at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC, where he was able to pursue his passion for working with pediatric patients.

Dr. Fenn's desire to enter academia started during his second year of pharmacy school, when a faculty member observed him facilitating discussions between first-year students and other staff. That faculty member suggested he consider academia for his future, and as Dr. Fenn discovered his enthusiasm for research shortly afterward, he was able to fully realize how well a career in academia could serve his strengths and interests. Those passions led him to his current position, where he splits

time between his clinic, precepting advanced pharmacy students and seeing patients, and class activities within the pharmacy curriculum.

Dr. Fenn has an intrinsic motivation to serve others, citing it as a reason to pursue a career in pharmacy. He has experienced the benefits of service learning, as he committed much of his time to health fairs throughout his pharmacy schooling. He is passionate about serving patients and students in his work.

### PHPR 490: VULNERABLE AND UNDERSERVED PATIENT CARE

This elective course, Vulnerable and Underserved Patient Care, began a year prior to Dr. Fenn's arrival to the Purdue College of Pharmacy. Developed by previous pharmacy fellows as a means to educate pharmacy students about underserved populations, the course is designed to give a broad overview of how students may serve vulnerable patients in their future careers. The course follows a two-part model in which students meet for traditional classes, in addition to completing three different service-learning sessions outside of class, which each last two hours.

**Figure 1 (banner image, above).** Dr. Fenn (far right) with his students and cofellow at the Asthma Fair in the spring of 2017.

In class, discussions surround topics such as cost-saving options for medications and how pharmacists may assist patients in navigating these avenues. In this setting, the goal is to address challenges faced by this patient population. These often include the inability to pay for medications or the patients' lack of knowledge on the detriments of medication nonadherence. The classes utilize creative problem-solving and group discussion to prepare students to face these obstacles in the clinic setting. While Dr. Fenn believes these discussions are useful for his students, he insists that to fully understand barriers facing patients in underserved communities, it is vital that students interact with these populations through service-learning activities.

Dr. Fenn asks just one thing of his students: that they show up with an open mind. One of Dr. Fenn's major goals for the course is to dispel misconceptions about underserved populations. An open mind is key to breaking down preconceived notions. Students may complete a number of activities during their sessions at the clinics, including hands-on patient assessment and counseling, shadowing nurses or nurse practitioners, or completing applications so that patients may receive discounted or free medications. Although the students participate in a variety of activities, they experience just a snippet of the tasks Dr. Fenn and his colleagues complete on a daily basis.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS: FAMILY HEALTH CLINICS

Students complete service-learning activities in one of two clinics, which are located near Purdue University's campus in Delphi and Monon, Indiana. The clinics are included in a system of four federally qualified health centers called the North Central Nursing Clinics (NCNC). They provide patient services involving nurse practitioners, pharmacists, social workers, and support staff to underserved areas. Most patients live rurally with little access to health care specialists. Many patients have finite resources, struggle with health literacy, and face language barriers. A majority of the patient population have some form of Medicaid or Medicare insurance, while a significant proportion have no insurance at all.

When Dr. Fenn arrived at the NCNC, he first had to identify the workflow and skill set of each of the providers in the office. From there, he was able to identify areas in which he could implement new initiatives. The motivation was to demonstrate the value of the pharmacist in this setting, while improving patient care. In his first year as a fellow, Dr. Fenn pioneered an asthma health fair for the clinic. He started by reaching out to established

patients who had an asthma diagnosis and made appointments with them. Dr. Fenn's team of pharmacy students were available to interview patients about current asthma symptoms and medication use. This information was passed along to the provider, who determined whose medication regimens required adjustment or continuation. The event allowed pharmacy students in attendance to see how their skills in interviewing patients could benefit both the provider and the patient in a hands-on way.

### STUDENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Dr. Fenn envisions other changes, such as programs that would improve transitions of care for patients who have recently been discharged from the hospital. His successes with patients have improved his relationships with clinic staff; the staff trust his recommendations and initiatives because they see the valuable role that Dr. Fenn and his students play in the patient care process. In turn, students see how Dr. Fenn applies his clinical expertise and counseling techniques when working in the clinic. After observing, the students ease into patient interactions and make an impact through their own clinical knowledge.

In this course, students gain an understanding of how pharmacists operate in a clinic setting and how they can make a difference in just one visit. Dr. Fenn finds that many students come out of service-learning experiences with an affirmation that they are pursuing the correct career because of the fulfillment of working with patients. He partially attributes those positive interactions to the way the course and the clinic are set up. The clinic is a teaching facility that also accepts Purdue nursing students, and Dr. Fenn believes this creates an environment that is conducive for pharmacy student success.

Olga Vlashyn, a third-year professional student in the College of Pharmacy, took the Vulnerable and Underserved Patient Care elective in 2017 and had an "eye-opening experience." When asked about her perspective, she said:

It motivated me to work harder in the classroom, so I can have a voice for patients who aren't at the table. I also witnessed that it takes patience and thinking outside the box to ensure that you are reaching this unique subset of patients.

For her, the course provided a means to "gain a unique perspective on patient care."

Through the elective, Dr. Fenn feels that he is able to make more personal connections with his students.

A one-to-one teacher to student ratio is common for service-learning activities, which allows for a more personal relationship between teacher and student. Dr. Fenn is able to see how students communicate with patients, and he gives prompt feedback. He can address questions and concerns from students immediately, and he tailors discussions to guide students to insights about the population being served. Some students develop research projects based on topics discussed in the service-learning course.

As part of the course, students complete a variety of reflections. At the start, students provide a personal perspective on vulnerable populations. After each service-learning activity, they complete a short debrief regarding their encounters with Dr. Fenn, outlining what they think went well or poorly with the interactions and what they would change about the encounter if they could. Finally, the students complete a reflection at the end of the course and compare it to the one from

the beginning of the semester. Dr. Fenn states that while the impact to the students is difficult to measure in a numerical sense, it is apparent in their confidence and realizations about vulnerable populations.

### CONCLUSION

While Dr. Fenn admits that it is difficult to quantify success, he believes service-learning has tremendous value in students' development. In his opinion, this is a classic example of students "getting out of it what they put in." He believes that service-learning will always have a role in pharmacy education, as it has served him well throughout his career.

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